

Leisure Worlder

OF THE MONTH

WAYNE TISS

When Mason City, Iowa, is mentioned, the first name it conjures is "Music Man" Meredith Willson. Bring up the subject of Des Moines and radio in the same context these days and everyone thinks of Dutch Reagan.

Wayne Tiss, Rossmoor's Leisure Worlder of the Month for January, played a cornet in the same municipal band with Willson. He managed two radio stations in the Iowa capitol city at a time when the current president-elect of the United States was broadcasting sports there.

Tiss frankly admits he didn't envision the future success of either Willson or Reagan any more than they expected that this tall son of the Hawkeye state would one day make a profound impact on Hollywood radio and television.

As vice president of Batten Barton Durstine & Osborn — the prestigious ad agency known worldwide as "BBD&O" — Tiss became famous as the man who made both clients and listeners happy by airing such programs as The Jack Benny Show, Amos and Andy, Burns and Allen, Cavalcade of America, General Electric Theater (hosted by Ronald Reagan), Hit Parade with Frank Sinatra, Private Secretary with Ann Southern, Lassie, The Phil Harris-Alice Faye Show, and a host of others.

With such a background, it is understandable that after moving to Leisure World in 1970 Tiss would contribute time on the board of directors of both the Laguna Moulton Community Playhouse and the Lyric Opera Association of Orange County. He also was chairman of the Community Relations Committee during 1973-76 as a Golden Rain Foundation director.

Tiss says his life's axiom is to "Try to do a little good each day and have a little fun," and his years on a first name basis with stars of the entertainment field have made that philosophy even more pleasureable to those with whom he rubs elbows.

Beginning with those Mason City days of this youth, Wayne bubbles with stories about his life.

"In high school Meredith and I organized a quartet with a couple of other friends. We called ourselves 'the Jones Brothers' " he laughs.

Meredith went to the John Philip Sousa band and Tiss enrolled at the University of Iowa where, as a journalism major, he became editor of the school paper and paid for his education by forming a dance band. "I called it by the catchy name of 'Wayne Tiss and His Music.' "

Fresh out of college in 1925 he became promotion manager of the Des Moines *Register and Tribune* and program director of radio stations KSO and KRNT. "Dutch Reagan broadcasted over WHO," Tiss recalls.

It was after the Cowles Newspapers made him promotion manager of the *Minneapolis Star* that Tiss moved on up to national advertising and eventually to "the Hollywood jungle" as he calls it. There he was placed in charge of all of BBD&O's broadcast operations.

In putting into action his creed of "doing something for fellow man," Tiss served on the board of trustees of College (now University) of the Pacific; lectured on advertising at the universities of Minnesota, Iowa and Drake and gave a paper on pay television at Stanford.

Once, in a graduation address at the Los Angeles Art Center School of Design, Tiss posed this question: "Do fools rush in where angels fear to tread?" Answering himself, he said, "You bet they do. That's why people go! someplace. They don't know enough to be afraid."

Wayne was the first non-actor to serve on the board of directors of the Screen Actors Guild Pension Fund; was one of the early organizers of the National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences, and served on a variety of committees from 1957 through 1960.

He is the proud owner of an honorary Emmy but if you visit his home you have to ask to see it. Wayne keeps it in an oblong box, just as he has closeted much of his past successes and muted the trumpet that helped get him started at Mason City with a piccolo player named Meredith Willson.